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OPEDA Newsletter

ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES OF THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

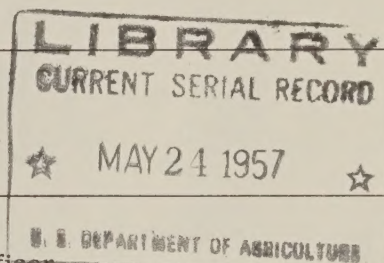
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REPORT ON LEGISLATION -- by Dillard B. Lasseter, Executive Officer

Federal Pay Raise: The Senate Post Office and Civil Service Committee has tentatively scheduled hearings for the second week in May. Senator Neuberger (D.) of Oregon is chairman of the subcommittee to consider this legislation. Outlook for favorable action this session is not good, but we will point out that bills not acted upon during this session will carry over into the next session beginning January 1958, when the atmosphere might be different.

Federal-State Retirement: No forward progress on this as yet, but the Advisory Committee is actively working on the phases of the legislation that have not been too favorable in the past.

Training: S.385, authorizing training of Federal employees at public or private facilities, and for other purposes, has passed the Senate. This legislation is expected to be enacted into law this session.

Health Insurance: Rep. Morrison (D.) of Louisiana and Rep. Lesinski (D.) of Michigan have introduced legislation which would provide for combination basic and major health insurance benefits for Federal workers and their families. (H.R. 753 and H.R. 6687). Employees would have option of taking policies from among four alternative competing types of plans. The Government would pay 50 percent of the cost of the basic phase of the plan -- expenses from ordinary-type illnesses and hospitalization -- and the entire cost of the major phase of the plan -- "catastrophic" type of illnesses. Total cost to Federal employees with families would not exceed \$104 a year and to single employees \$39 a year for combined benefits. Progress on this legislation will be reported in next newsletter.

Pay Increase for Scientists and Engineers and other professional employees is somewhat promising, as the turnover in these categories continues to be high.

Retirees: Legislation to raise annuities for retirees is still in the works, but no progress since the last newsletter.

H.R. 6161 will make the effective date of the 1956 Retirement legislation retroactive, as it affects survivors of employees who died between the date of enactment of the legislation and its effective date of October 1, 1956. We do not know how many are affected by this and can not predict the outcome of the legislation but thought it of possible interest to our members.

We are glad to report that the new Civil Service Commissioners have now taken office, with Commissioner Harris Ellsworth as Chairman. This action should speed up some of the Federal employee legislation.

OPEDA DINNER TO BE POSTPONED

The Committee working on arrangements for the annual OPEDA dinner found so many conflicting activities during the month of May that it was decided to postpone the dinner until a more favorable time. Many thanks to Milt Bryan and his committee for their efforts. We know we can count on them to resume plans after a suitable date has been set.

RECENT SPEAKERS

OPEDA has outgrown lunchroom accommodations in the South Building and for the last two luncheon forums, as well as for the special meeting to hear Dr. Cardon, used the auditorium for the program, thereby making it possible to invite other USDA employees.

On March 16, the group adjourned from the lunchroom to the auditorium to hear Ross Pope, staff member, of the House Appropriations Committee, tell of his trip behind the Iron Curtain last fall with Rep. Whitten. He showed a number of colored slides, including a view of Red Square and the Kremlin, one of the Moscow Fair with a display of farm equipment, and scenes of Poland and Hungary. Mr. Pope also showed the slides to a capacity crowd at Beltsville.

On April 17 the auditorium was again used so that non-members could be invited to hear Ernest C. Betts, Jr., new Director of Personnel of USDA, speak on "Personnel Administration in the Department of Agriculture." Mr. Betts remarked that the Department of Agriculture has for the past 25 years provided leadership in the personnel field. He paid tribute to Dr. W.W. Stockberger and to other former personnel directors of

(over)

BOX SCORE ON MEMBERSHIP

REPORT ON MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Agency	Eligible Employees* (GS-5 & Above)	Total Members 10-1-56	New Members Added	Total : Members : 4-26-57
Admin.				
Staff Unit	753	50	7	57
ACPS	38	20	1	21
AMS	4,211	555	41	596
ARS	8,779	873	81	954
CEA	78	45	0	45
CSS	3,304	77	80	157
FCA	199	33	1	34
FCS	79	30	16	46
FHA	2,979	96	37	133
FCIC	224	19	5	24
FES	190*	122	12	134
F&D	673	23	4	27
FAS	385*	103	23	126
FS	6,462	608	22	630
REA	858	101	1	102
SCS	9,853	154	420	1,374
Outside USDA		23	-	23
	39,065	3,732	751	4,483

The Box Score shows the number of new members added to the rolls since the membership drive started on October 1. Excellent progress has been made in building up OPEDA membership to its highest number in the history of the Organization. Committee members of each Department agency are to be commended for their good work along with others who have volunteered their services in securing new members. To all those who have joined to help obtain the Organization's objectives, we say Welcome.

-Hugh Brown,
OPEDA Membership Chairman

From OPEDA Office: Please note that membership increased 20% in this 6-month period. Highest honors to "Buck Rogers (SCS); next to Frances Debnam (ARS) and to W.C. Tucker (CSS). To Hugh Brown we say "A job well done!"

*Figures on eligibles from USDA Office of Personnel as of June 30, 1956. Doesn't include agricultural attaches and extension agents who are eligible. Total of 4,483 include some who are not paid for 1957. Total paid up membership is 4,070.

the Department. He cited, as the Office of Personnel's main purpose, helping line officials do the best job of finding and managing personnel and mentioned areas of assistance: getting the most capable people to join the Department; helping to find ways to create a satisfactory working "climate"; developing practical ways of review and appraisal and assisting in correcting any deficiencies. He mentioned the need for constant review in an effort to take from professional positions those duties and responsibilities which can be done by less highly trained personnel, but also stated that those in the personnel and management areas must remember that the lowest man on the chart is an employee and has needs and desires that should be fulfilled, and that technical aid office must take cognizance of that if it is to serve effectively.

Dr. P.V. Cardon on April 25, at a meeting sponsored jointly by OPEDA and the USDA Graduate School, spoke to a large group of OPEDA members and other USDA employees, giving some observations gained from his experience as Director General of the Food & Agriculture Organization of the UN, with headquarters in Rome. His remarks were "something by way of an analysis on technical assistance in general." Stating that 10 or 12 years ago it seemed that technical cooperation could be undertaken with a great deal of assurance, he considered that we now face what seems to be inevitable -- something of a reaction -- and that a bit of analysis is warranted. Dr. Cardon stated that "we need to face squarely that we did make mistakes, we made some faulty assumptions, but at the same time we must say that much good has been accomplished." "The very activity has aroused interest in improvement, has contributed to further clarification of major needs, has promoted understanding, and has stimulated much constructive action in many parts of the world." He thinks that technical aid will continue at some level and at some magnitude, that it is a long-term program which cannot be accomplished overnight.

HERE AND THERE

Latest Agricultural Attache to join OPEDA's ranks is Dr. Eric Englund, stationed in London. Many will remember Dr. Englund from BAE days. * * * Bill Harris, former chairman of OPEDA's Public Service Committee, has transferred from Washington to the CSS office in Chicago. We miss you, Bill, but congratulations, and we're expecting new OPEDA members from Chicago. * * * Congratulations to our many members who are retiring. Remember, you are still eligible for membership. Damon A. Spencer, who retired March 31 from ARS, Beltsville, and who was President of OPEDA in 1946, wrote Mr. Lasseter: "I take this opportunity to express and record my real appreciation for the benefits OPEDA has afforded me and my professional colleagues. I also greatly appreciate your efficient service as the Executive Officer of OPEDA."